

Insider Discloses Approved For Release 2005/01/11 : CIA-RDP88-01315R000300510119-5 CIA Got Orders for Castro Study

BY ROBERT L. JACKSON

Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—The Central Intelligence Agency primarily acted at the direction of higher authority in considering whether to overthrow or assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in the early 1960s, a source close to the Rockefeller Commission said Monday.

"This was not a case of a runaway secret police," the official said, adding that this conclusion would be documented in the commission's final report to be submitted to President Ford on Friday.

The official, who declined use of his name, said the White House or National Security Council might not have reviewed specific plans to assassinate Castro.

But he said U.S. intelligence officials had undertaken such projects—with help from Mafia figures—in response to high-level instructions that Castro should be removed from power.

"The country's going to get a bit of a black eye from this report," the official said. "A lot of names will be named. There's enough blame to go around."

Meanwhile, Vice President Rockefeller, who heads the eight-member commission appointed by Mr. Ford to investigate CIA activities, said the panel had found some illegal actions by the agency but no widespread pattern of misconduct.

"There are things that have been done which are in contradiction to the statutes, but in comparison to the total effort they are not major," Rockefeller said.

According to the National Security Act of 1947, the CIA may undertake a wide range of foreign intelligence activities—presumably even assassination—if that should be directed by the President's National Security Council.

Meeting reporters after the commission's last meeting in its five-month inquiry, Rockefeller said that charges of massive illegal spying on U.S. citizens were unfounded.

"But that doesn't mean that there haven't been things done that were wrong," he said. "We (will) recommend extensive steps to be taken to prevent it in the future."

LOS ANGELES TIMES
3 JUNE 1975

President Ford appointed the blue ribbon citizens commission early last January, shortly after the New York Times reported that the CIA had long engaged in massive illegal domestic surveillance of U.S. radicals and anti-war dissenters and had collected dossiers on 10,000 Americans.

CIA Director William E. Colby subsequently acknowledged that his agency, in apparent violation of its charter, had gathered such files, had infiltrated about 20 agents into anti-war organizations, had opened the mail of Americans corresponding with persons in Communist countries and broken into the homes of agency employees suspected of disclosing secret government information.

Colby said that any "missteps" by the CIA were "few and far between" and were not criminally motivated.

Rockefeller was asked if prosecutions were likely based on information gathered by his commission.

"That will be up to the Department of Justice," he said. He added that "it's up to the White House" whether the commission's backup files are turned over to the Justice Department.

A 350-page report of the panel's findings and recommendations—but not the backup testimony it heard in secret or all the documents it collected—may be made public as early as this weekend, Rockefeller said. The timing will be up to Mr. Ford, who will return from a European trip tonight.

"I think you're going to be surprised and pleased by the comprehensive nature of the material," Rockefeller told reporters.

The commission originally was appointed to examine charges of im-

proper domestic activity by the CIA, which is limited by law to gathering foreign intelligence. But after press reports surfaced that the agency had been involved in foreign assassination plans, the commission began investigating that area, too.

How thoroughly the commission did its work is open to question. At least one key witness who reportedly was involved in U.S.-sponsored efforts to kill Castro—Johnny Rosselli, a West Coast gambling figure—was never subpoenaed or questioned by the commission. The Times has learned.

R- JACKSON, KODAK
CIA 7.02 Rockefeller
Comm.
CIA 4.01
ASSASSINATION
ORG/MAFIA
CIA 1.04 LAWS
DALE, Edward

The report is likely to defend the CIA as having been pushed into the area of assassination consideration by higher officials. The Times' source said.

However, the record of the CIA's involvement in such activities from 1960 through 1963 is incomplete and sometimes incoherent, he added.

"There are gaps in the story," he said. "Records were not always made or preserved. You just cannot reconstruct these events precisely."

Justice Department files obtained by the commission reportedly show that in late 1960 or early 1961 intelligence officers were dealing with Rosseli and Chicago gangster Sam Giancana on plans for overthrowing or killing Castro.

As perennial targets of federal prosecutors, the two racketeers reportedly hoped to build credit for any possible future actions against them. They hoped also, by eliminating Castro, to be able to reopen lucrative gambling casinos that had been closed by the Cuban leader.

Time magazine and the Sacramento Bee reported over the weekend that the CIA also had enlisted the aid of three East Coast underworld figures—Russell Bufalino, James Plumeri and Salvatore Grancello—to spy in Cuba in preparation for the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. Bufalino was quoted by the Scranton, Pa., Times Monday as denying that he had supplied information for the invasion.

If the invasion had been successful, the three were assured they could recover \$450,000 left behind in Cuba and reopen casinos in which they had an interest, according to this account.

The Rockefeller commission is understood to have obtained the minutes of a White House meeting the next year—in August, 1962—which show that high Kennedy administration officials discussed but dismissed the possibility of assassinating Castro.

A short time later, however, according to recent press interviews with retired Air Force Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Lansdale was asked by then-Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy to draft "contingency" plans for dealing with Castro in the event long-range missiles were placed in Cuba.

Lansdale, then an intelligence officer, said his plans "may have" included the assassination of Castro but that he no longer had a copy of them.